Improving Computer Literacy Skills of College Faculty: Tips and Techniques

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There is a growing demand in the schools that new teachers be computer literate: they are expected not only to possess a working knowledge of computers but also to use computers effectively in their teaching. These expectations have pressured university faculty to increase the use of technology in methods courses and to model how technology can enhance instruction.

While teacher certification programs are attempting to respond to these pressures, many obstacles exist that impede the use of technology in methods courses. For instance, some institutions lack computers for faculty use or possess antiquated machines that provide minimum functionality. In addition, even when modern equipment is available, many faculty lack the basic skills to use that equipment. Faculty often acknowledge the need to be technology literate themselves before they can begin the process of incorporating technology into their classes.

At one large urban university, recent state initiatives have provided every School of Education faculty member with a modern computer. The arrival of these machines has increased the demand for technology assistance, and a realization that scarce resources exist that can provide hands-on support and training.

This roundtable will discuss various strategies, their effectiveness, and lessons learned as one university experiments with methods to provide faculty opportunities to improve their computer literacy skills. These strategies and discoveries include:

- Appointing one faculty member as “technology liaison” whom faculty were encouraged to contact for assistance, and the realization that demands for individual support far outweigh the amount of time one individual could offer;
- The development of a weekly technology faculty development course and scheduling strategies and incentives that encourage faculty to attend;
- The realization that when faculty learn to use software that improves their own personal productivity, they are indirectly motivated to explore other aspects of technology;
- Developing strategies for providing a course that accommodates faculty at different technology levels;
- Devising ways of dealing with faculty whom exhibit high levels of computer anxiety.

This roundtable presentation will allow personnel responsible for providing technology assistance to faculty a chance to exchange ideas, methods, and resources.

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